

The character of the name dispute between Macedonia and Greece

Frčkoski, Danailov Ljubomir

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version
Monographie / monograph

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Frčkoski, D. L. (2009). *The character of the name dispute between Macedonia and Greece*. Skopje: Progres Institute for Social Democracy, Skopje; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Büro Mazedonien. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-63593>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer Basic Digital Peer Publishing-Lizenz zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den DiPP-Lizenzen finden Sie hier:
<http://www.dipp.nrw.de/lizenzen/dppl/service/dppl/>

Terms of use:

This document is made available under a Basic Digital Peer Publishing Licence. For more Information see:
<http://www.dipp.nrw.de/lizenzen/dppl/service/dppl/>



The Character of the Name Dispute between MACEDONIA and GREECE

Dr. Ljubomir Danailov Frckoski



THE CHARACTER OF THE NAME DISPUTE BETWEEN MACEDONIA AND GREECE

by

Ljubomir Danailov Frčkoski PhD,
Professor of International Law,
'Iustinianus Primus' Faculty of Law,
Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

May 2009

The publishing of this policy paper is supported by
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung,
office Macedonia



Authors take full responsibility for their expressed opinions and positions. The opinion and positions in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Skopje.

Proofreading provided by: In-Out TCC
Cover design and pre-press: Promo DSGN
Copies: 500

SUMMARY

The Study discusses the character of the name issue between Macedonia and Greece. Launching the conflict energy and open and hidden items of the dispute is of crucial importance for the mediators and politicians involved in its resolution and diplomatic and technical opportunity thereof. This definitely has impact on the parties in their attempts to disclose and control their own emotional energies involved in the dispute assisting in its rationalisation.

It also provides chronology of the conflicting phases through which the dispute is canalised with regard to the latest mediator's proposals for its resolution.

The tradition of each of the foreign-policy analysis relating to dispute resolution or just a comment on it implies consideration of its determinants, the factors that have created and maintain its dynamism and are topos for resolution (or, if things start going the wrong way – the very escalation of the tension towards a conflict) of the dispute.

Indeed, I should say I have had chance to hear and see, either in a capacity of minister or professor consultant, all types of interpretations, opinions, and analyses relating to the bizarreness, absurdity, incredibleness of the name issue between the Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Greece, since its has been internationally articulated in 1991.

That has been done by various politicians or experts, local or foreign, in good faith and those reserved, who, as I consider, observed from today's point of view, have been lacking, a same outline for good evaluation. Namely, they could not perceive the character of the issue and make appropriate subsequent assessment why that issue, together with its anecdotic 'absurdity', still exists and is developed into a literature topic per se of textbooks on international law and international relations.

At the same time, this name issue also bears political implications in impeding the development of the overall relations in the region, especially in context of Macedonia. The most apparent dimension of this name issue is distortion of the NATO enlargement with the so-called Adriatic group of countries (Croatia, Macedonia, and Albania, of which only Macedonia has been blocked by the Greek veto in its first attempt).

Such blockade is proclaimed for the accession process of Macedonia in the EU, by another Greek veto, if no solution is found for the name issue, and etc.

This name issue, as we have witnessed, has succeeded in breaching the rules of procedures for admission of new member states as provided for in the UN Charter and the admission procedure in the context of the UN Security Council. The case of Macedonia before the UN today may be a lesson to be learned as

an example of violating the UN Charter in the case of admitting a new member state.

This dispute has managed to entrap the EU, and previously even the Council of Europe (CoE) and NATO, into a procedural labyrinth in context of misuse of their internal procedures in exercising the right to veto by a member state when admitting new members in to these organizations.

The dispute has affected the Greek-American relations on the development plans of the Region, with increasing intention of becoming even more complicated, especially if Macedonia is to remain isolated from the Euro-Atlantic integration processes, and given its complex, multi-cultural social structure, it may enter a long-term stagnation.

Therefore, this would be a serious 'absurdity' of the name issue, thus deserving a detailed analysis.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MACEDONIAN-GREEK DISPUTE

1. The first important thing to know is that this DISPUTE is not strategic and political ('actual-politics'), in terms of those definitions of disputes concerning competitive political interests of the actors to gain access to certain resources. Namely, Macedonia and Greece are not countries competing for the same resources, they are rather inversely complementary. Their silent and still successful economic cooperation following the signing of the Interim Accord at the UN in 1995, has illustrated this. Greece in the meanwhile has become the first foreign-policy partner of Macedonia and the biggest foreign investor. Nevertheless, the successful economic cooperation did not manage to solve the issue (by itself), as the political 'modernists' have hoped. On the contrary, during the peak of such cooperation, the issue 'has exploded' into a new phase and even negative energy (2004-2008)?!

The reason for this is that the basic characteristic of the name issue between Macedonia and Greece is its symbolism, 'signage'; this is an issue involving the use and control of symbols that signify identity and relate to the word 'Macedonia and Macedonian'. For this, both countries have pleaded, on different grounds, their 'ownership', control or participation in its meaning. In this regard, this dispute is very postmodern, a dispute about symbols, ironical one, constructing simulacra of history interpretation. Designation by name and recognition thereto (to use the words of Charles Taylor), recognition of the group identity has increasingly become, in the Balkans and in the contemporary world, a basis for conflicts and disputes.

These types of dispute are not directly affected by economic cooperation and interaction of the actors. Such dispute has been 'vaccinated' on the grounds of modernistic, enlightenment optimism that development per se would solve or mitigate any problem.

By this I am not opt to say that economic cooperation does not create a more friendlier

atmosphere and better knowing each other; nonetheless, at the end it is necessary to make a bridge or division of the meanings on and about the basic symbol – sign as leap towards solution. Without such step forward, the dispute smoulders or cyclically escalates.

If one fails to understand this, it is impossible to grasp the dispute argumentation used by the both sides, with all their exaggerations and, sometimes, with Balkan saloon-type rhetoric. To understand the argumentation and the dispute character is basis for its solution, and, hence crucial, and not supplementary literature for the involved diplomats.

You could not understand, for example, the Greek coinage about 'stealing history' that allegedly 'the Skopians' do to them, or the Macedonian paranoia that Greeks actually do not like that Macedonia and Macedonians exist at all.

1.1. If one puts aside the baroque-like Balkan ornaments and arrogance of the Balkan small imperialisms such as the Greek one, there are theses which finally become accessible when reducing 'the Greek position' in the issue seen from this aspect.

For example, it is possible to reach 'the Greek fear' that if the Greeks recognize or there is wider affirmation of a country with the name of Macedonia and of people with same such name (regardless of the fact how much the word 'Macedonia' would be used inside Greece for Greek Macedonians and in the northern Greek province), then the notion of 'MACEDONIA AND MACEDONIAN' in international relations will depart together with us, the Macedonians from the Republic of Macedonia.

Greece cannot use internationally, even if it wants so, the term Macedonia and Macedonians for its own citizens, because it has a hysterically ethno-homogeneous orientation towards a single Greek nation and ethnos. Hence, Greece uses only internally and geographically the term Macedonia or Greek Macedonians.

This means that de facto we will be the only Macedonians and our state the only Macedonia internationally. This is a nightmare for the

Greeks, a nightmare they try to hinder by all means.

The latest variation of such “impeding” reasoning the Greek position is built on the subject that Macedonians, if bearing such identity, will provoke wide-ranging chaos in the various so-called Macedonian identities in the Region. In line with this position there are several identities such as Greek Macedonians (Macedonian), Bulgarian Macedonians, Albanian Macedonians and Slav Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia. This position evidently involves intentional error in confusing secondary identity of population drawn from the territory of part of the countries where they live (in that sense even the Prime minister of Greece might be Macedonian, but with Greek national identity) and primary ethnic, national identity of the Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia.

However, the basic question for the Greek side, important in understanding the issue, is: why to divide the meanings at all? Why is the common use of the symbols Macedonia and Macedonians so important for them to preserve it as monopoly? Why would they risk to be blamed internationally and open such long low-level crisis in the Region?

This question cannot be understood without knowing the history of ‘the Greek success’ to become part of the EU only on basis of ‘controlling’ the license of the ancient Greek democracy and culture, and not on basis of fulfilling the economic criteria for EU membership (in those times when Greece joined the EU, the former SFRY had much better economic and financial performances for joining the EU than those of Greece). Regardless this fact, Greece managed to become prominent and ‘profitable’ part of the EU, just acting on basis of ‘the obligation’ of the European nations to accept a new member that controls the territory of the ancient Greek and Latin foundations of the European civilization. This experience has been implanted in the collective perception of the Greek culture vis-à-vis the external world.

Now, when ‘threat’ appears to share part of that culture with a country from the neighbourhood, the instincts of defence, based

on the experience of high profitability from the culture licenses, have come to surface in a hysterical deluge. The Greeks are especially irritated that this might happen in relation to a small country, which according to the traditional Balkan principles must be inferior and must ‘obey’ bigger regional powers.

Such farce of local ‘imperial cultures’ and their affectation constitutes the kitsch side of this dispute even today.

1.2. For the Macedonian side, the issue is not only dimension of name of the state but it is also connected to the identity of small nation. If such small nation cannot indicate themselves as ‘Macedonian’ and as such is recognized internationally, then there is danger that the old thesis of ‘a Macedonian salad’ might be opened, with the notion of non-existence of a separate ethnos ‘Macedonian’ as a substratum of the state with the same name. In that case, the census of peoples living in Macedonia and those being part of other, bigger nations in the neighbourhood, would look like this: Albanians, Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks, Vlachs, Roma, Turks, but the majority ethnic population would not be allowed to call themselves ‘Macedonian’. Such absurdity will, reasonably speaking, open the assimilation process by the other and close Slavic peoples, mostly by the Serbs and Bulgarians at the expense of the Macedonians.

As a result, the name issue for the Macedonians appears as extremely important and possibly ‘fatal’. For that reason, this issue is exceptionally difficult to solve by means of techniques of the usual ‘compromise seeking’ and diplomatic pressure. Hence, this issue has been deferred for such a long time.

In the conflict dynamics of the issue, every side has been developing and construing culturological positions that have not existed at the very start; serving to build up or equip better the conflict rhetoric. For example, in the context of Macedonians, a narrative has been developed on possible links with the ancient Macedonians of Philip I and Alexander the Great. An extreme position is being taken even to deny the Slavic character of the nation. Such thesis was not dominant or even present in Macedonia before the late 1990s. This thesis did appear in the émigré circles abroad rather

early; by means of such discourse, the emigration attained much greater impact on the internal political relations in Macedonia.

No special benefit has been seen out of this; this has now even assumed some caricature forms thus minimizing the country position internationally. However, 'in the footage or newsreel' on culture and identity confrontation, such constructs on the mission of the own ethnos become substitution for the reality. Part of the complexity of the problem lies precisely in the above.

2. The second characteristic of the name issue between Macedonia and Greece is its LACK OF ANY BALANCE.

This dispute in other words is radically disbalanced. Within the name issue, Greece has ignored, since its outset, the existence of international subject in the character of the state called Macedonia, with which Greece should eventually negotiate. Making scandal, according to Greece, because of the other's 'stealing history' (like in the movies on Indiana Jones), Greece has always been addressing someone beyond Macedonia, in context of Macedonia: the EU member states, USA, Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia, Russia, its domestic public, but never the very state with which it has the name issue. Indeed, this is part of the historical Balkan complex of imperial local cultures (the Serbian and Greek cultures had such roles), of the clientalism, arrogance and resentments; however it assumes concretized diplomatic form in this name issue.

Thus, the characteristic of the name issue is important to conclude since it determines the entire set of diplomatic techniques of mediation that would not be required to such extent, provided this characteristic of lack of balance had not been present.

Since its start, the issue has been going on in the following triangle: both involved sides and a strong mediator. The mediator context sometimes was 'doubled': the mediator set out by the UN Secretary General, Cyrus Vance, and, later, Matthew Nimetz (in accordance with Resolution 917) with the Americans in his background.

The positions of both sides concerning such mediation are also different; however, with time, the position of 'double mediation' was accepted as inevitable. Greece, for example, has always felt rather uncomfortable in position when the Americans assumed mediation. Greece even has considered the Americans biased in favour of the Macedonian side, while in more wider context it has wanted to see the Americans out of the region; hence to put the region at the disposal of the EU and of course to the key position of Greece in such case.

This was also influenced by the strong anti-American sentiment in Greece, which is by far more comfortable with Russia in the Region, then having the USA therein.

This may be surprising only to someone who lacks any information on the history of the positions maintained by Russia, Serbia, and Greece concerning the Macedonian issue, as opposed to USA, Great Britain and Italy at the start of the 20th century in the so-called 'The Eastern Crisis', and even after that.

Obviously these forms of odium and alliances have become not so open and formal in the background of the main setting. At the main setting, or the foreground, in context of exerting pressure on 'the nameless partner' (the Republic of Macedonia), Greece has tried everything in the period that followed (1991-1995) but a direct military aggression. Greece introduced a total economic blockade against Macedonia intending 'to throw Macedonia on its knees' in 1992 and 1994. The forecast was that the line of Corridor 10 ('Via Militaria'): Thessaloniki – Skopje – Belgrade – Middle Europe, is the vital artery for Macedonia, and that any blockade of this corridor line would bring undesired effect. Together with such economic action, the Greek services engaged all their resources in context of their Serbian colleagues to promote inter-ethnic instability in Macedonia, to propagate fear and panic among the local Christian Orthodox population from Albanian aspirations, so that later Serbia, with Greece in the background, would appear as saviour of the local Slavic Christian Orthodox population. Indeed Greece then openly hailed such policy of Serbia, while some of the Greek politicians (like Minister Samaras) proceeded to its active propagation.

Hence, the aim, given such international circumstances, was to see if that state, Macedonia, would be 'able to make it', would be able to survive at all, and after that, to be allowed to negotiate on any subject.

The first option of Greece was to create some type of a 'tunnel' along the valley of Vardar River of fully controlled local population (who would be later given name in order to see what population that is) in direction of Serbia, at the detriment of the state of the Republic of

Macedonia by partitioning the country into Macedonian and Albanian parts.

If this was to fail (Bulgaria was against such hard scenario, due to own reasons; nevertheless, Milosevic in 1993 did propose such option to Mitsotakis), then the next option was to have a weak, controlled state blackmailed by Greece, thus avoiding the need to have any negotiations with such failed state, and never about its name.

I am certain that Greece has never wanted to see total disappearance of Macedonia as such and having on the northern Greek border extended or expanded Bulgarian and Albanian states. However, Greece has always wanted to see a weak, controlled and blackmailed Macedonia, which would be ultimately defaced and deformed in context of its name and identity.

This hard-line position has changed since Macedonia survived all blockades and did not yield. In the meantime, the position of Bulgaria and the then Government of Zhelyu Zhelev pursued a very constructive position towards Macedonia. Bulgaria then opened a new and complete alternative along the Corridor 8 (certainly, more expensive) for the supply of oil and energy-generating products. The price that Macedonia had to pay was huge, as reflected in economic stagnation and in the creation of the gray economic sector which managed to survive all blockades.

However, the gain was 'passing the survival test' and introducing definitively a new self-esteem of the nation that was able to survive a terrible challenge but did not yield. This had its own reflections internationally. Entirely concrete assistance and cooperation with serious international partners commenced. The 1992-1994 period saw the profiling of stable cooperation with the security services of the USA in Macedonia and hence joint actions in third countries were started as well. Then this was followed by increasing recognition of the country under its constitutional name (Russia, China, all the way to the 120 nations that has recognized our constitutional name). Still serious economic assistance was lacking; however, Macedonia in that period – in spite of the blockades and having not participated in

the wars in the territory of former Yugoslavia – had the best standard in the Region (except that of Greece) with an average salary of DM 250 (when salaries in Bulgaria were literally US\$ 14, in Serbia US\$ 20, in Croatia US\$ 40, etc.).

In the meantime, in 1994 Greece was sued by the EU at the Court in Luxembourg for having violated the EU rules by imposing a blockade against a third country.

After these blockades and having survived these extreme measures, and especially on grounds of preserving the inter-ethnic coherence and inclusiveness, Macedonia somehow managed to get the position of becoming a partner. The international community started to notice the very presence of Macedonia at the negotiations table. The Macedonian international friends pointed to Macedonia as an example; the situation started to improve, but again within the name issue negotiations triangle.

3. The third characteristic of the Macedonian-Greek dispute refers to the character of both states and their societies. We could call this a dispute of diverging 'narratives'.

In other words, the similarity or discrepancy between the states involved in a dispute gives additional conflict energy, or vice versa, runs smooth. In our case, we have an ongoing dispute between two countries that have very different, or, even, conflictively divergent societies and states.

Regardless of the fact that both countries are democracies, in the case of Greece, it involves almost a schizophrenic obsession with construction of ethnically homogenous Greek society having a single and unique culture. This obsession also implies harsh pressure against the diversity and the minorities to the utter limits of unlaw. It represents in Europe an atypical harshness and rigidity against culture diversity and minority rights, insisting at the same time on ethnic homogeneity that is considered as the absolute condition for stability and functioning of the state.

On the other hand, Macedonia is the opposite in every detail of such picture. Macedonia is a multi-culture society having high level of inclusion of the diverse cultures in the political system and all the problems this bears. For example, this would be the rather slow, negotiating political system of making decisions that sometimes blocks itself and so needs international support and mediation. Macedonia is an open society to the extreme, thus involving participation of international experts of the Council of Europe, the EU, and the USA in certain local decision-making processes. Macedonia has, by far, the highest standards for minority rights in European context, rights that go well beyond the minority context; this in turn helps create a rare multi-cultural society and a democratic political system. From this aspect, Macedonia is a unique case in the harsh reality of the Balkan environment.

When Greece sees Macedonia, it sees its own Greek 'nightmare'! Greece sees all it does not want to be and all that is afraid of becoming. Then this fear is projected and transposed in

excess of aggression and intolerance against Macedonia.

Indeed the foreign experts cannot understand the very origin of such Greek fear of a small, peace-loving country as Macedonia, if they fail to fully and clearly comprehend this perspective.

Greece perceives Macedonia as some kind of 'plague or contamination' of uncontrollable ethnic demands that might spill over and spread into Greece, in easy and predictable manner. If Macedonia succeeds and constructs a functional democratic system with such pluralistic society, then this would represent a great challenge for ethnically closed societies such as the Greek one.

The best solution for Greece would be to show that such system as the Macedonian one is not functional, weak, subjected to blackmail and constantly on the verge of internal blockade and collapse. To have such, weak Macedonia on the northern Greek border, is probably the desired and/or hidden, best solution for Greece.

In the meantime, Greece shows that it is under constant political stress and en garde. Such Greek paranoia, which normal diplomatic 'radars' cannot detect and identify, is also unclear to many diplomats involved in the issue. At this level, the dispute between Macedonia and Greece has also something of the Jacques-Marie-Émile Lacan's dimension of psychologising, with the unconscious fears in politics.

II. PHASES OF THE DISPUTE BETWEEN MACEDONIA AND GREECE

Chronologically, the name issue between Macedonia and Greece has three phases, including the present one.

The *first phase* persisted between 1991, when the modern Macedonian state was established, and 1995, when the Interim Accord was signed in the UN between the two states;

The *second phase* lasted from 1995 to the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest that addressed the issue of NATO enlargement.

Finally, the *third phase* is the present one which might be called the phase of denouement.

I call the **first phase** – the phase of ‘great denial’. This was a period, partly also described above, when Greece used to practice its total negation and denial of the then new state, leaving thus the impression that even the mostly dramatic and radical reversals are under consideration. The major characteristic of this phase are the two economic blockades against emerging Macedonia – in 1992 and 1994.

In this early phase of the name issue, perhaps the only serious attempt was made to resolve this dispute by a compromise suggested by the British diplomat, Robert O’Neil, under British and American auspice. He proposed that the designation Republic of Macedonia (Skopje) be used at international level. In early 1992, the then Macedonian President, Kiro Gligorov, and the Macedonian Parliament gave their consent. However, following the Greek refusal, this only serious attempt to date went down the drain.

The second characteristic of this phase was earmarked by the Greece success to impose the climate within the EU on the issue of recognizing Macedonia. The culmination of this was the EU Lisbon Summit (26-27 June 1992) and its so-called Lisbon Declaration. In this Declaration, the EU stated that: “...it is prepared to recognize Macedonia, but under a name that would not include the word ‘Macedonia’ as such.....”

The Macedonian Parliament rejected such proposal and the corresponding resolution and the bilateral Macedonia-EU relations were frozen.

This gross intrusion by Greece and misuse of the common solidarity within the EU would soon demonstrate to be a short-term success for Greece, all the more the very fact that Greece, as precondition for the Lisbon Declaration, had executed a wider legal usurpation. It involved negation of the 1991 Robert Badinter Report on Macedonia (Part 6). This Report – prepared by the most eminent team of experts and politicians that the EU had ever assembled on any topic whatsoever and led by Robert Badinter, with regard to the fulfilment of the criteria for the recognition of the new states formed from the dissolution of SFRY – precisely states: ‘... the name Republic of Macedonia cannot be treated as basis for any territorial claims and irredentism... .. and thus cannot be obstacle to the recognition of the newly established states’.

The reversal happened during the British EU Presidency in the fall of 1992 at the EU Edinburgh Summit. By means of the so-called Edinburgh Declaration, the EU concluded that it was not in position to solve the so-called name issue and would let the UN initiate procedure for the admission of the applicant country – Macedonia. By this, the EU unblocked Macedonia’s accession in the UN.

Later in this phase, Greece was able to produce situation within the UN leading to de facto violation of the provisions of the UN Charter on admission of new member states. Greece did so by gross dramatization of the issue of security and safety if the UN admission were to be allowed to applicant country with ‘such name’ (Macedonia). Namely, Greece managed to impose the UN admission issue as security threat to the region and not simply as admission procedure for a new member? Greece managed to do this because there was at that time great fear within the international community and within the UN that the Bosnian war would spill over and thus spread in the other parts of the region. The blackmail and falsified allegations raised by Greece thus fell right on the hotbed of such fear.

Hence, the UN violated the admission procedure by the introduction of additional admission condition, outside of Article 4 of the Charter: the very condition that the applicant country be admitted under the provisional designation of 'The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' ('FYROM') and conduct negotiations under the auspice of the UN Secretary General on this issue (concerning its name) with Greece (negotiations that are conducted even today) in accordance with UN Resolution 817 and Resolution 845.

Even upon Macedonia's accession in the UN, Greece continued to raise tensions and accordingly introduced another, a second economic blockade in 1994 against Macedonia. On grounds of this blockade, the other EU member states initiated legal action against Greece at the Court in Luxembourg, claiming violations of the EU agreements. This situation was resolved by means of an agreement between the two countries on good-neighbourly relations, i.e., the so-called 1995 Interim Accord, concluded under the auspice of the UN Secretary General and the USA.

Article 11 of this Interim Accord precisely stipulates that Greece would not block Macedonian membership of international organizations, provided that Macedonia applies under the UN designation ('FYROM').

The **second phase** of the dispute came about after signing of the 1995 Interim Accord and the basic normalization of the bilateral economic cooperation and the mutual diplomatic relations. This phase is characterized by the perception cited at the begging of this text that the normalized economic relations have not contributed per se to the resolution of the essence of the issue. This has not even contributed to the issue mitigation. I call this phase – a phase of consolidation of the positions, but also a phase in which Macedonia was given partly damaged recognition and fixation on the acronym "FYROM".

In this phase, Macedonia struggled to introduce as wide as possible legalization of its constitutional name within the international community. This was a successful effort, since all great powers (USA, Russia, and China) recognized us under the constitutional name

and finally (by 2007) we were able to reach the number of 120 countries that did the same. Practically speaking, that represented about 2/3 majority of the UN General Assembly.

It was then important not only to solve the name issue by this – and by doing so, whether we would leave the UN-sponsored negotiations – but simply, to become 'visible' and consolidate our international position. This phase also represented a great diplomatic defeat for Greece, regardless how Greece explains this.

My very answer to the question whether there was time and position during these phases to solve the name issue by a compromise, would be: NO. In these phases, which had to elapse, both involved states showed their muscles and exhausted themselves in the efforts to consolidate and extract the maximum from their own positions. The proposals to solve the issue by compromise were met with radical and flat refusal. Even solutions, which are considered a reasonable compromise in the last phase (such as 'Northern Macedonia' as substitution for 'FYROM'), were outright rejected and their proposers were stigmatized.

The second phase became exhausted in front of the doorsteps of the two organizations so important for us and in which Greece has the right to veto: NATO and EU.

This in turn opened the **third phase**, which I call: the **phase of denouement**.

The phase of denouement started in classical manner: with Greek scandal in NATO. Indeed, Greece has decided to not miss the opportunity to block Macedonia, in spite of the contractual obligations from the Interim Accord. Macedonia was prepared to apply for NATO membership under 'FYROM' [even consideration was made of a final and compromise solution proposing 'Republic of Macedonia (Skopje)' as substitution for 'FYROM']. The NATO member states concluded that Macedonia has fulfilled all other requirements, however even in such given circumstances Greece has threatened to use veto just because of the still pending name issue. This was a surprise even for the Americans as well; probably it was intended for

them too. Some kind of way out was the unanimous decision of the NATO member states stating that the membership invitation for Macedonia is definite and guaranteed, provided the name issue were to be resolved. So, Greece managed once again, by means of usurpation of the procedures, to impose its own national interest and national position as the general one. Hence, the name has become for Macedonia additional criteria for NATO membership.

This has been the position of the issue when this text was written (end of 2008). The phase of denouement has become complicated by the Greek veto at the NATO Summit in Bucharest, in the sense that, inside Macedonia, the new, centre-right populist Government of the VMRO-DPMNE has assessed, risking international isolation of the country, Greece that just pretends to be negotiating and that Greece is not prepared genuinely to solve anything, and that Greece cannot in any way accept the identity of the Macedonians as such. Equally, now the VMRO-DPMNE is making everything it can to also block the negotiations under the auspices of the UN and Matthew Nimetz. Given these circumstances, there is risk that the last proposal made by mediator Nimetz might go down the drain, a proposal that has serious steps leading towards a reasonable compromise, perhaps acceptable for the two sides. The UN mediator has communicated this proposal to the involved parties in August 2008. This proposal has included several essential possible solutions: Northern Republic of Macedonia (geographic attribute for the state name, per Greek demands); recommendation to the countries that have recognized us under the constitutional name, to use the new name (only recommendation, again Greek prompting); the national passport would have three names: Northern Republic of Macedonia (in Latin alphabet, and in English and French), and Република Македонија (in Cyrillic alphabet, in Macedonian); and naming the nation and the language as such remains open.

The aforementioned proposal in this moment of the current phase has no solution and hence it offers two alternatives: the Greek and the Macedonian. The Greek alternative is that the nation and the identity should be extracted from the very name of the state (the citizens and the language of Northern Republic of Macedonia); on the other hand, the Macedonian alternative is rather clear: the Macedonian nation and the Macedonian language. On this question, the Macedonian side is not in position to make any compromise, for reasons cited at the very start of the text.

Solution should be pursued within the modes of writing the names 'Macedonian'. Supposedly, the Greek diplomatic proposal has suggested that the names be written in the Cyrillic alphabet (the 'македонски' nation, and, the 'македонски' language). For the Greeks, this is a solution, because they indirectly, through the alphabet, determine that this refers to a Slavic nation, the Macedonians. However, the translation is strained, and, linguistically inevitable. Therefore, a possible solution could be pursued within the context of three-name writing of the attribute Macedonian for the nation and for the language: македонски (i.e., Macedonian, but in Cyrillic alphabet as the first one), Macedonian and macédonien (in English and in French) for the nation and for the language. These three adjectives would go together in a package and that is the way how they would be officially written down in the international organizations for our nation and our language.

However, due to political circumstances known only to the present Macedonian Government, these negotiations have been frozen at this very point; at this moment, it is not known how things would move forward in this delicate concluding phase. Indeed, it would be pity not to make use of this route, because of the impression that if the attributes for designating my people and their language as Macedonian are secured as such – the solution for a name for international use could be reached, by far, more easily.

